

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU  
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**EXPLORING SEVENTH-GRADERS' INTERPRETATIONS OF ANTHONY  
BROWNE'S PICTUREBOOK *ZOO*: A CASE STUDY**  
**MA Thesis**

**Helen Parker**  
**SUPERVISOR: Natalja Zagura**

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## Abstract

Picturebooks are generally associated with younger children and used to introduce different parts of the world to them. Authors of picturebooks have created a wide range of picturebooks, the intended audience of which is not limited to small children. Such books require a deeper understanding of imagery and require more complex levels of interpretation to fully learn the meaning of the picturebooks. The present MA thesis discusses seventh-graders' responses to Anthony Browne's picturebook *Zoo* to figure out how students interpret picturebooks. The thesis is divided into two main chapters – a literature review focusing on the notion of a picturebook and the use of picturebooks in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom, and an empirical study.

The first chapter is divided into three sections. The first section includes the discussion about the relationship between images and text in picturebooks. The second section focuses on the study about children's interpretations of the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne conducted by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles (2003). The third section presents an overview of the research done on using picturebooks in EFL classrooms.

The second chapter includes an analysis of the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne, providing an overview of the empirical study. The empirical part of this thesis is based on a case study carried out among 11 7<sup>th</sup> grade students in which the students were interviewed in order to find out their interpretations of the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne. The results of the study are presented and analysed in comparison to the findings of the study conducted by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles (2003).

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## Introduction

The formation of language as a means of communication with the rest of the world is one of the most important parts of human development. During the early development years, it is common that children's immediate experience of the physical world is limited and therefore dependent on words and images (Marriott 2002). It is also common practice that people usually associate picturebooks with children and as Salisbury and Styles (2012) have found, picturebooks are traditionally thought to be a helping device for three- to seven-year-olds in order to develop literacy. Although this statement restrains the use of picturebooks by giving it a specific age limit, one should not underestimate the complexity of picturebooks. There are picturebooks which demand extremely active reading (Arizpe and Styles 2003) and could be used to discuss important topics, which vary from how to recognise emotions to whether animals should be kept in a zoo – the possibilities are endless. Therefore, picturebooks are considered an important form of literature, which provide equal access to stories and ideas not only for children but also teenagers and adults (Arizpe and Styles 2003).

Along with economic growth and the development of technology, the world we live in has become increasingly more visually complex. According to Seglem and Witte (2009), the old-fashioned way of reading from-left-to-right is not the main means of successful communication in this day and age. Reading print words is not enough to fully grasp the world. This is due to the fact that we encounter countless visual stimuli every day: as we walk on the street, browse social media, play games on different devices, read books or other media, etc. A scholar of visual literacy described this notion already in 1995 when she stated that we “live in a highly complex visual world and are bombarded with visual stimuli more intensely than most preceding generations” (Kiefer 1995:10 in Arizpe and Style 2003:27). This statement is even timelier today because thanks to freedom of speech people are more open to express their opinions publicly whether it is graffiti on the street or in the form of a meme which is spread

on the Internet. Although children are growing up in this visually complex world, we should not presume that they are naturally visually literate (Pantaleo 2015). In order for children to be able to understand and interpret the media they encounter, it is important that we teach them to become skilful visually literate citizens.

The term ‘literacy’ is first and foremost associated with written text, more specifically the ability to understand and create coherent text. When we take a look at the term ‘visual literacy’ then we have to think a little bit further. Starting from the beginning, images are often used to visually interpret the meaning behind a certain word. For example, the word ‘apple’ is associated with a red round object, which often has a stem and a green leaf attached to it. This is the information that an adult might present to a child to encourage association. As such, it is the first step in the process of learning how to create connections between imagery and the meaning behind it.

Different scholars (Avgerinou and Ericson 1997; Stokes 2001; Roche 2015) talk about ‘visual literacy’ as a means of communication – it all starts with thinking about the images, then conveying meaning, reproduction of the images in verbal or visual and generally enjoying the images. Nodelman (1988) discusses the connection between the verbal and the visual and states that even if we are not trying to imply the verbal then while conveying meaning about the images we still do it by using verbal language, therefore interpreting visual information into verbal.

Today, images are not just printed and static, the digital era has created a situation where images “vary in medium, style, method and purpose of construction/composition, as well as in their uses, sites of display, and how and to what extent they are combined with other modes” (Pantaleo 2015:114). Therefore, in a modern world we should not only concentrate on the printed images, but also all the other media and the visual communication has become more challenging but at the same time more diverse and interesting.

At this point, it is important to consider the term ‘picturebook’ in the context of this thesis. Looking at different sources on picturebooks, one can certainly see a variety of definitions, but there is also the question of the way the term is written. Different writers and researchers seem to prefer different spelling options as the author of this thesis was intrigued to discover when examining a wealth of research done on the subject of picturebooks. Below, different definitions are introduced and the spelling of the term is also highlighted.

Barbara Bader (Bader 1976 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:19; Bader 1976:1 in Lewis 2001:1) and Perry Nodelman (1988), the first scholars to define the term use the term as two distinct words ‘picture book’. Barbara Bader (1976) defines the term ‘picture book’ as follows:

“A picture book is text, illustrations, total design; an item of manufacture and a commercial product; a social, cultural, historical document; and foremost an experience for a child. As an art form it hinges on the interdependence of pictures and words, on the simultaneous display of two facing pages, and on the drama of the turning page. On its own terms its possibilities are limitless.” (Bader 1976 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:19; Bader 1976:1 in Lewis 2001:1)

The main similarity between the two definitions is that both scholars bring out children as the main audience for picturebooks. Nodelman (1988) even adds that picturebooks are not only meant for children but more specifically for young children. An interesting perspective brought out by both scholars is that picturebooks, in their opinion, are not considered literary works, but rather as art forms, and not just any kind of art forms but something exceptional. In his definition, Nodelman (1988) states that picturebooks either convey meaning or tell a story to the audience. Bader (1976 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:19; Bader 1976:1 in Lewis 2001:1) does not bring this perspective out per se but one could guess that by relating picturebooks to “the drama of a turning page” (Bader 1976 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:19; Bader 1976:1 in Lewis 2001:1). Hence, she is, in fact, referring to the suspense of following a story unfold on the pages.

As a fundamental difference between the two definitions, Nodelman (1988) states that picturebooks have little or no text at all, whereas Bader (Bader 1976 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:19; Bader 1976:1 in Lewis 2001:1) specifically mentions cooperation between the two important elements – pictures and text. Bader (Bader 1976 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:19; Bader 1976:1 in Lewis

2001:1) also mentions the production side and the cultural belonging of picturebooks, both of which just add extra information to the definition. All in all, the author of the thesis finds that the two definitions complement each other, but since both definitions were written some time ago it is also important to take a look at some more up-to-date approaches.

Lewis (2001) and Arizpe and Styles (2003) have in their more modern definitions used the term as a compound noun ‘picturebook’. Nodelman (1988) state that there is something extraordinary about picturebooks and refers to it as an art form, while Lewis (2001), talks about picturebooks as “quasi-literary artefacts” (Lewis 2001:1). He states that for him books and reading always go hand in hand and therefore he views “picturebooks as first and foremost a kind of text” (Lewis 2001:1). Nikolajeva and Scott (2000) and Arizpe and Styles (2003) both highlight the importance of the co-effect of images and words. Arizpe and Styles (2003) also state that there can be multiple interpretations as different readers interact with the picturebook. Their approach is more open and differs from the perspective of other authors.

Roche (2015) and Hunt (1995) use the hyphenated word ‘picture-book’ while talking about the term. Roche (2015) likes the hyphenated form “because it seems to me to have within it the intricacy of the relationship between words and pictures and also allows for the ‘wordless’ form and the non-fiction form” (Roche 2015:81). Hunt (1995) does not give a specific definition for the term, but he talks about the birth and development of picturebooks.

The author of the thesis also considers the relationship between the text and pictures important, meaning the two separate elements in picturebooks should be looked at as one entity. The author of the thesis conducted a survey in 2016 among 5th graders in order to find out their preferences about picturebooks. The results of the survey also showed that students prefer story picturebooks in which the text and pictures are equally important. This has led the author to following the example of Nikolajeva and Scott (2000), Lewis (2001) and Arizpe and Styles (2003), and use the term as a compound noun – ‘picturebook’.

The first chapter includes the literature review about the relationship between images and text, the study conducted by Arizpe and Styles (2003) and research done about using picturebooks in EFL classrooms.

The second chapter includes the analysis of the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne, the presentation and analysis of the results of the study and the comparison between the current study and the research conducted by Arizpe and Styles (2003). The shortcomings of the study are also addressed.



## CHAPTER 1

### 1.1 The relationship between image and text in picturebooks

As mentioned earlier, picturebook researchers and also students (who participated in the research conducted by the author of the thesis in 2016) have brought out the importance of images and text co-existing in a picturebook. Anthony Browne, the author of the picturebook *Zoo*, has said that for him picturebooks are able to speak with a reader best when images and text are modifying each other (Browne in Hunt 1995). Although the author of the primary source of this thesis has emphasised the importance of the notion, it is still important to take a look at different opinions on the matter.

Picturebook researchers have said that picturebooks consist of two sign systems – images and words (Nikolajeva and Scott 2001; Pantaleo 2008; Sipe 2012). These two categories can have multiple sub-systems. For example, when we talk about images then there is “the sign system of colours, where different colours may be associated with different emotions or feelings” (Sipe 2012:5). The same could apply when we look at words in picturebooks. In some picturebooks the authors use metaphors to make the text figurative and we can interpret the tone of something that has been said in a picturebook based on the use of words. Both sign-systems are important in constructing meaning in a picturebook (Sipe 2012).

Generally speaking, images usually complement words to make the experience more visual and heighten the important elements (Salisbury and Styles 2012). Many scholars have brought out that in picturebooks images and text perform together in order to create the whole story (Pantaleo 2008; Salisbury and Styles 2012; Lewis 2001). Although both of the elements are important, the proportion in which images and text are presented is not fixed.

In a novel the words exist on their own and they do not really need to be accompanied by images. In a picturebook, on the other hand, the words always seem imperfect and as if they are the skeletal structure of the picturebook and the pictures add the necessary flesh (Lewis

2001). As the old saying goes “a picture is worth a thousand words”, it could be presumed that pictures convey more information than words and there is more than one way to interpret them (Lewis 2001). Lewis (2001) also mentions that often the pictures do not repeat what the words have said but might create a new theme altogether. Nodelman (1988) talks about it as irony in literature – “when words and pictures combine, irony emerges from the way in which the incompleteness of each is revealed by the differing incompleteness of the other” (Nodelman 1988:223). This, then, could mean that the images and words do not contain the exact same details, but have their own little viewpoints of the story which result in an integral narrative. We should not separate images from words in picturebooks because “neither of them necessarily makes much sense on its own but they work in unison.” (Salisbury and Styles 2012:89) Both of them have their own qualities and they would not tell the same story when examined individually. There would be many details which would go unnoticed compared to looking at a combined book.

As discussed above, pictures tend to play a bigger part in conveying the content of the story, but the basis for this is the core narrative structure provided by the words. It is perfectly reasonable that pictures are of more relative importance in the story because the term for this literary art form is, after all, picturebook.

## **1.2 *Children reading pictures, a study by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles***

In this section, I consider it important to give a detailed description of the study carried out by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles from 1999 to 2001 and presented in a collection of articles published in 2003. As mentioned before, the author of this thesis came across the study while looking for information for her bachelor’s thesis. Their research inspired the author to write this master’s thesis and it is one of the principal sources used in this paper.

The main objective of the research conducted by Arizpe and Styles was to explore how children read visual texts, what kind of skills children need in order to engage with visual text and to get an understanding of children's visual literacy. At that time, the research conducted by Arizpe and Styles was unique because no one had ever conducted such a study where children of different ages were asked a set of questions about particular picturebooks.

Arizpe and Styles went through a process of choosing the right picturebooks for the study. Suitable books had to be contemporary, multi-layered and appealing to children aged 4-11. After consideration, three picturebooks by two well-known picturebook authors – Anthony Browne and Satoshi Kitamura – were chosen. To have general background information about students' reading habits and to find out whether students were familiar with the authors Anthony Browne and Satoshi Kitamura, a questionnaire was carried out before the interviews. Altogether 486 children from the early years to upper primary answered the questionnaire. After that, a pilot study was carried out in three schools and three different school stages, namely early years, lower primary and upper primary. The sample of the pilot study consisted of two boys and two girls from each school stage. The children were interviewed to improve the instruments.

Prior to the interviews, the children took a look at the picturebook with their teacher for approximately 20 minutes and were then interviewed individually. The interviews were carried out by five researchers among students from seven primary schools with different ethnic backgrounds, social classes and levels of multilingualism (approximately 35 per cent of the interviewed children were bilingual) located from London to Essex. A sample of 84 students answered questions in detail during a semi-structured interview. As in the pilot study, the researchers interviewed an equal number of boys and girls. The interviews consisted of 20 questions and were approximately 45 minutes long. Individual interviews were followed by a group discussion with fellow interviewees and two children who had not been interviewed, but who had been chosen by the teacher in case any of the participants were not present. Therefore,

a third of the participants only took part in the group discussions which lasted approximately an hour and were conducted on the same day as the interviews. Children were also asked to draw pictures in response to the text under discussion.

In Arizpe and Styles' opinion, in order for the children to construct meaning about a picturebook, repeated readings are suggested. Therefore, they revisited the schools who had participated in the study three to six months later to see whether there were significant changes in children's interpretations. During the follow-up, one fifth of the original sample were interviewed again. Second time around, the emphasis of the questions was not on the details but rather on the picturebook as a whole.

The interviews and group discussions were transcribed and then qualitatively analysed. Arizpe and Styles describe their process of qualitative analysis during which they used different methods. They started by partially employing the grounded theory approach by Glaser and Strauss (1967 in Arizpe and Styles 2003) and codes from previous studies. Firstly, they explain Kiefer's (1993 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:5) "categories and subcategories according to Halliday's functions of language: informative, heuristic, imaginative and personal" (1993 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:5). After which they move on to Madura's (1998 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:5) who, bearing in mind the research done by Kiefer, used three main categories on particular picturebooks: "descriptive, interpretive and the identification of thematic trends" (1998 in Arizpe and Styles 2003:5). Arizpe and Styles (2003) recognise that the categorisations suggested by other researchers helped them as analytical tools in order to consolidate their findings, but on the basis of their results they compiled their own codes which they improved throughout the analysis. To facilitate understanding, they divided oral response into two groups. The first group was 'categories of perception' since the responses were based on codes which showed what the children noticed about the picturebooks, for example, noticing of significant details. The second group was 'levels of interpretation' deriving from the way children made

sense of the picturebook codes, for example, interrogating or evaluating the text. Primitive analysis was used to organise the data, which was then followed by deeper analysis in a specific direction in the interest of the researcher.

Children's drawings in response to the picturebooks were analysed by Kate Rabey (in Arizpe and Styles 2003), who was a class teacher and art specialist involved in the study. Rabey's class comprised 4- and 5-year-olds and she acknowledges the unique situation her students were in because she was a teacher-researcher involved in the study. Rabey's students had therefore more time to think about the picturebook and form their response to it. Rabey analysed the pictures using adapted categories. The results showed that children drew by showing their literal response to all three picturebooks. For instance, students studying *Zoo* by Anthony Browne depicted the central issue of animals being in captivity. Rabey considers it important to mention that children usually drew similarly to the artist of the picturebooks. Rabey concludes by bringing out that in spite of children's age they are able to interpret, understand and communicate visuals. She brings a parallel with the process of writing in which by doing we form an understanding.

In conclusion, Arizpe and Styles were pleased with the positive feedback from the students. In their opinion students were able to interpret and discuss different visual elements, metaphors and understood humour in the picturebook. They were appreciative of the eager way in which children were discussing different topics from moral stands to environmental issues. Children responded to the picturebooks in an emotional manner and used personal analogy while trying to relate to the characters or animals in the story. This was especially prominent with the picturebook *Zoo*. Children felt empathy towards the animals and were able to discuss the morality of keeping animals in the zoo. Although the overall impression of the student's abilities was excellent, Arizpe and Styles mention that there were children who had difficulty in finding words to express their thoughts. Arizpe and Styles were satisfied with the results of

the study and concluded that there is still much work to be done in order to develop visual and verbal skills of children.

Although this thesis is based on the study conducted by Arizpe and Styles, it should be mentioned that the scope of the two studies are significantly different. Arizpe and Styles used three picturebooks and interviewed 84 children to understand their responses. In comparison, the sample of the current study is eight times smaller. As the picturebook used in this case study is Anthony Browne's *Zoo*, the results of this study shall be compared to the findings of Arizpe and Styles later on in the discussion paper.

### **1.3 Use of picturebooks in teaching English as a foreign language**

Study activities in Estonia are regulated by the National Curriculum for Basic Schools, on the basis of which the school curriculum is compiled. Based on these two documents teachers prepare their own work plan. Since the target group for this thesis is in the III school stage of study, I considered it important to describe some of the competences which could be pursued with the use of picturebooks in language classrooms. Among other things, students are expected to be able to express themselves creatively and respect art and cultural heritage. Picturebooks, as a form of art, could be the means to talk about art and its connection to literary forms and social topics, which also give students an opportunity to express their opinion on different matters. When it comes to the means teachers are required to use to teach, then subsection 5 (4) of the National Curriculum for Basic Schools states that teaching should be carried out using contemporary and diverse teaching methodology, methods and means (including visual learning materials). It seems that the use of picturebooks when teaching English as a foreign language, assuming that they are used purposefully, meet the requirements provided by the National Curriculum for Basic Schools.

In an English classroom, teachers habitually use a textbook and a workbook to teach English as a foreign language. Study materials are compiled specifically with this in mind and subsequently tested and analysed by different specialists. Thanks to the development of technology, teachers can now use different apps and websites to enrich their language lessons. When it comes to literature, then depending on the student's age some teachers use storybooks to make the students familiar with authentic English materials. Often teachers give their students an assignment in which students have to read books on their own, translate a page from the book and retell the story to their teacher or peers. This kind of assignment is time-consuming and may also intimidate some students. In Enever's (2006) opinion, reading books often implies that the students have to concentrate on learning vocabulary and the story is secondary, meanwhile picturebooks invite students "to behave as readers, sharing the book as a social experience and gaining confidence in 'telling' the story themselves, an important part of actually becoming a reader" (Enever 2006:60). What Enever means is that picturebooks allow the story to become the most important part and students need not focus on vocabulary as they would with regular text-based books. In re-telling stories, students become more aware of the story and convey a deeper understanding about it in the end, which will help them understand stories later on in their lives.

In a regular English as a foreign language classroom (EFL) it is conventional to use published and tested materials to teach English. As a beginner teacher, the author of the thesis fully understands that compiling one's own materials may prove difficult due to lack of time and the necessary experience. As mentioned before, picturebooks could be used in a language classroom as an authentic material for sparking conversation about different topics. Throughout the years, the subject of picturebooks as a study material for EFL classrooms has increased in popularity and many scholars have studied EFL learners' responses to reading picturebooks

(Lee 2015; Kaminski 2013; Mourão 2013; Sun 2017). It seems relevant, therefore, to give a brief overview of the research done in this field.

Annett Kaminski (2013) looked at students' responses during their first encounter with the picturebook *The Smartest Giant in Town* by Julia Donaldson. Altogether 24 students aged from 8 to 9 from a primary school in Germany participated in the study. Kaminski (2013) was interested in the way students responded to the picturebook, whether images helped them understand the picturebook better, what was the long-term impact of the picturebook and the benefits for teaching. The students learned about the picturebook through a storytelling session after which they were encouraged to comment on and respond to what they saw in a classroom discussion. The students initially commented in German, but afterwards the teacher talked the same things over in English. A year later, the researcher visited the school again, this time to conduct semi-structured interviews with half of the students who had previously participated in the study. In the first part, students were encouraged to reflect on the shared reading and in the second part, they played a card game in which they had to choose a card with a picture from a picturebook and say something about it in English. Based on students' verbal response, the researcher believes that students were interested in picturebooks. Classroom discussion showed that students used images for understanding the storyline better and even tried to guess what could happen next. Kaminski (2013) believes that reading picturebooks could be a pleasant way to discuss issues and make the experience of learning a foreign language more joyful.

The teacher in Kaminski's (2013) study gave the students an opportunity to express themselves in their mother tongue and afterwards repeated the same notions in English. This is a rather clever trick to get the students to express their opinions, but at the same time also try to associate a word in their mother tongue with a word in English. Although Kaminski (2013) wanted to see the long-term effect of the picturebook, it is unclear to the author of the thesis why did she carry out the interviews and literary activities a year after the initial contact with



the students. In the opinion of the author of this thesis the result would have been better if the interviews had been carried out during the initial encounter and then the same procedure had been repeated a year later.

Sandie Mourão (2013) carried out a study among 16-18-year-old students in a secondary school in Portugal. The objective was to figure out whether picturebooks really could be used in an EFL classroom with older students, to spark interest in students to appreciate the visuals, and develop students' language skills. Mourão (2013) used the picturebook *The Lost Thing* by Shaun Tan and a film made after the picturebook released in 2010. Students got to know the story by reading the picturebook together and gave their first impressions. In pairs, they were asked to look at the relationship between images and text in detail and present their findings to everyone else. As feedback, students were asked to write a short summary about the picturebook. After they had discussed all the details in the picturebook, they watched the movie and compared the original source to the adaptation. When asked whether they enjoyed the picturebook or the movie best, most of the students answered that they liked the movie more because all the additional effects (like sounds) helped them understand the storyline better. In the end, students were given a written test consisting of short texts about the picturebook, exercises focused on language and a short composition. The students found it fascinating to uncover the story while later looking at the pictures and comparing it to what they had thought the story was about. Students enjoyed the experience and realised the importance of the connection between the visuals and text. Although students in Mourão's (2013) study were sceptical about picturebooks, it is a good example of how picturebooks could be used in a language classroom. It is remarkable to read that with each new medium students gained another perspective and were engaged until the end.

Hsiang-Ni Lee (2015) examined 39 Taiwanese adult EFL learners' responses to children's literature. The participants were freshmen in college taking part in an intermediate-

level English course. Lee (2015) concentrated on finding out how the students responded to reading picturebooks in a classroom and how they evaluated the effectiveness of picturebooks in developing their English competence. Materials used in the study consisted of eight picturebooks and two movies, which in the author's opinion is rather a lot. Discussions about the picturebooks consisted of pre-reading activities, reading picturebooks, dealing with words and phrases and post-reading activities. In response to picturebooks, students participated in multiple activities from which the author brought out three most popular – drawing, the mini-play and tableau (a living picture). Results on the use of picturebooks were collected by presenting participants with eight open-ended questions. In general, students found using picturebooks in the EFL classroom useful and only one of them stated that it was a waste of time. In conclusion, students expressed positive attitudes towards reading picturebooks and enjoyed doing specific literary activities carried out by the researcher. The students noted that picturebooks could be helpful for students who are struggling with learning English and with developing reading comprehension.

Chia-Ho Sun (2017) carried out a research among 80 Taiwanese students. The objective of this study was to concentrate on teaching vocabulary through picturebooks. The students worked with the picturebooks in three 100-minute reading sessions over the course of three weeks. They read the same picturebook in different groups, but the instructional modes were different. Before reading, the students were asked to take a pre-test of the target words and two control words that did not occur in the picturebook. Immediately after they read the text, they took the same test again and the same test was also carried out one month after each reading. Sun (2017) introduces the three methods used in the research: 1) students were supposed to read the picturebook on their own and clarify the words using the context and images; 2) students were given an instructed vocabulary lesson on all target words; 3) students were asked to form groups of four and complete three literary activities which invited the students to express their

opinion about the picturebook and create a poster. All three ways were followed by comprehension questions about the picturebook.

Most of the studies described above were interested in the students' responses to picturebooks created for native speakers of English. Kaminski (2013) and Mourão (2013) came to the conclusion that one should not desperately try and teach English through picturebooks, but they also found that sometimes it is a good idea just to follow the story and develop reading comprehension. This point does seem justified, but, as a language teacher, it is still important to pay attention to grammatical elements in order to improve students' language skills.

Although quite a large amount of research has been done on picturebooks elsewhere in the world, in Estonia, to the author's knowledge, there have not been many studies conducted specifically on picturebooks. Annika Apuhtin (2014) defended her master's thesis in which she compiled a study material in order to develop students' vocabulary and grammar in the I and II school stage in English as a foreign language lessons. Her purpose was to compile a study material which would focus on the development of students' speaking skills, grammar and vocabulary. In order to make sure the study material is viable she had six teachers test the material and if they had suggestions, she made the corresponding changes. The results showed that both the teachers and the students were satisfied with the study material. The students thought that the material made their lesson more exciting and pictures helped them understand the text better. The teachers who used the study material in their lessons thought that it was appropriate for the suggested age-group and that they would continue using the material.

The author of the present thesis wrote a bachelor's thesis in 2016 in which her idea was to get an overall understanding of what students think about picturebooks, which picturebooks students prefer, how often they read picturebooks and who gives them references for choosing picturebooks. To this end, a questionnaire was carried out among 5th graders in three schools in Tartu and the results were analysed. Research results showed that reading picturebooks is

not popular among students. When asked which kind of picturebooks they preferred, the students brought out picturebooks in which pictures and text are equally important and where the characters are roughly the same age as the students themselves. Students valued the quantity of pictures in picturebooks as that made the story easy to follow. Students said they encounter picturebooks rather seldom, but if they do decide to read a picturebook, they proceed from their personal preferences.

I was not surprised by the results of the study conducted for the bachelor's thesis and the fact that students think that picturebooks are meant for young children and therefore are considered childish. I believe that teachers, let alone students, do not recognise the full potential of picturebooks and how they could help initiate conversations about different topics. In fact, picturebooks are an excellent means for teaching visual literacy to students and developing their skill of expressing personal opinion, both in their mother tongue and in a foreign language. Before we can start teaching visual literacy to students and show them different ways to express their own opinion, it is important that we try to understand how students nowadays think. Therefore, the present study seeks to go beyond the approach of my bachelor's thesis and I have selected a particular picturebook – Anthony Browne's *Zoo* – as the reference point of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 Methodology

The objective of the case study was to find out how students interpret narrative through the relationship between pictures and text. The idea for this study developed while reading a research paper written by Arizpe and Styles (2003) about children's interpretations of three picturebooks. The author of the thesis started to wonder whether the procedure used by Arizpe and Styles could also be used with students who are learning English as a foreign language. The scope in which Arizpe and Styles carried out their study was, at the time of their study, something that had not been done before and it would not have been reasonable or practical for the author of this thesis to attempt to fully repeat the scope of their study alone. Therefore, the author decided to concentrate on one particular picturebook: *Zoo* by Anthony Browne. The objective of the case study was to find out how students interpret the picturebook, what elements they find interesting in the picturebook, what is their opinion about animals being kept in a zoo, and whether their opinion about picturebooks differs from the opinion of the students involved in the 2016 study conducted by the author of the thesis. The present study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What do students think about the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne?
2. How do they interpret the picturebook through the relationship between images and text?
3. How do they understand the moral of the picturebook?

## 2.2 Sample and procedure

In order to collect information about students' interpretations of Anthony Browne's picturebook *Zoo* the author of the thesis carried out interviews among 11 students aged 13-14 at a rather large secondary school on the outskirts of the capital of Estonia. The sample consisted of 5 girls and 6 boys who all belong to one English language learning group. This particular group of students was chosen because the author is their English teacher and therefore a trust-based relationship has been established. Prior to the interviews, the author asked for the permission of the parents of the students involved in the study. The students were interviewed individually to give each student an opportunity to express their opinion without being interrupted. Students were asked to describe the pictures while following the story and the interviewer asked semi-structured questions (Appendix 1) following the example of Arizpe and Styles which originally consisted of 18 questions. The author of the thesis added a question about the relationship between the narrator's mother and father, because she wanted to see whether the students were able to interpret their relationship based on the text and images. The author decided to leave out a question in which the students were supposed to describe the elephant and the people visiting the zoo, because the students described the picture during the discussion and the description of the people was already asked with the previous question. During interviews the author followed the interview questions, but also asked extra questions to encourage students to express themselves or to clarify information.

Prior to the interview the author explained the procedure, students had uninterrupted time to read through the picturebook at their own pace and then students described the picturebook and answered questions. Students usually spent 3-5 minutes reading the picturebook and the interviews lasted from 14 minutes to 27 minutes, making them significantly shorter than the interviews carried out in Arizpe and Styles' study.

The first two questions were about the cover of the book. First, the students were asked to give their opinion whether they would read the picturebook based on the cover. The second question was about the use of colour and the students were asked to describe what the stripes reminded them and why the author had chosen to design the cover like this. These two questions gave an idea about the students' first impressions and the way they were able to interpret the colour scheme.

Third question is about the hamster in a cage, as the picture has no visible connection to the main storyline, the students could let their imagination fly and create their own backstory to this picture. Fourth question is about the snail flying mid-air in the picture and students were asked to explain why they think it was there. Both, the third and fourth questions gave students the opportunity to open up their imagination and could be considered as warm-up questions.

The intentions of questions from five to nine were to see whether students noticed significant details in the pictures, the ability to interpret characters' relationships, the ability to articulate artist's intentions and evoke empathy. Students were asked to point out details about the people standing in a queue, to analyse the relationship between the father and the mother, to analyse the body language of the orangutan and gorilla and try to guess what the artists' intentions were.

In order to be able to express their personal preference, in question ten students were asked to choose their favourite picture and explain their choice. In question eleven students were asked whether they would describe *Zoo* as a good book. The question's intention was to see whether students' opinion about the picturebook had changed after discussing the picturebook in detail.

The purpose of questions under number twelve and sixteen were to understand students' ability to interpret the relationship between pictures and text. Questions thirteen and fourteen

were asked to gather background information about the students' visual content use and to understand if they think they are influenced by the media they consume. The last set of questions were asked to give students an opportunity to express whatever they were not able to say during the interview and to gather background information about whether students had seen the picturebook before or it reminded them of any other picturebooks.

### **2.3 *Zoo* by Anthony Browne**

Anthony Browne is Britain's Children's Laureate and has been creating picturebooks since the 1970s (Salisbury and Styles 2012). As he has been creating picturebooks for quite a while, he is aware of his audience and knows how to create picturebooks which are both aesthetically pleasing and also challenging. I first heard about the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne while writing my bachelor's thesis and after searching for information online, I decided to order the book. At first glance it looked like a regular picturebook that tells the story of how the narrator's family decides to go to a zoo. After several readings I understood the meaning behind the picturebook and the questions it raised for me also made me think whether my students would be able to see the same details and come to the same conclusions as I had. In order to make the story of the picturebook clearer for the reader of the current thesis, I have decided to give an overview with personal observations about the picturebook. The chapter is divided into paragraphs and in each paragraph a spread from the picturebook is presented and discussed.

The cover of the book has black and white wavy lines across the page and in the middle of the page there is a colourful family picture. The wavy lines on the cover could be a reference to a zebra, as usually they are kept in a zoo. The use of colour in this case really emphasises the family and makes them somehow more important, but it could also indicate that although their



lives seem colourful and good, people are trapped in a cage. Either way, the cover of the book really draws attention and engages readers from the beginning.

On the left-hand side of the spread there is a pure white sheet and on the right-hand side of the spread there is the title of the picturebook on a white sheet. The title of the picturebook is in capital letter and is written in black. This could indicate that everything around the zoo is pure and the evil lies within the zoo.

The left-hand side of the spread is white and the right-hand side of the spread is black. Once again this could be a reference to the good and evil. While we are used to read from left to right then it seems like by proceeding with the picturebook we are going from good to evil.

Prior to the primary storyline, the reader can see details about the publishing company etc. on the left-hand side. On the right-hand side, there is the welcoming page with the title of the book in capital letters and a hamster in a cage below it. The hamster's cage is depicted by using bright and clean colours and the hamster, who does not seem happy, is looking at the reader. The hamster could belong to the family, although the hamster is not mentioned in the rest of the story. It could also refer to the fact that people also keep animals in a cage at home so you do not have to go to the zoo to see animals being kept in captivity. The hamster obviously is not enjoying being kept in a cage because it looks sad and is looking longingly into the distance.

The left-hand side of the spread is white, but on the right-hand side the reader can see pictures of the main characters. Browne also starts his picturebook *Tunnel* in this way; therefore, this could be his way of introducing the characters. The reader can see the father, mother, the narrator (a boy) and his brother. At first glance, it looks like a typical family, but if you concentrate, you can see that the mother is the only one who is not smiling in the picture. It could be an indication that something is not right, but at the same time it could simply mean that she does not like to have her picture taken. The text underneath the pictures tells the reader

that the family went to the zoo last Sunday and that the brothers were really excited about it. In the text the narrator uses the word ‘excited’ and therefore the reader could presume that it is going to be a joyous story about a family’s outing.

On their way to the zoo the family gets held up in a traffic jam. In the picture, the reader can see cars crammed together and people shouting at each other. There is obvious tension in the air. In the right-hand corner of the picture there is a snail mid-air. The snail could be there in order to show the slowness of the traffic. The text also states that there are a lot of cars and adds that the children were really bored, which led to fighting. This information, however, is not visible in the pictures which show the boys sitting calmly in the car and there is no fighting. The narrator states that he is the one who gets told off in these situations, so there could be inequality between the brothers, but it could also be affected by the fact that the narrator’s brother is younger than him. The text reveals that the father then makes a joke, which none of the family members finds funny. Already in the beginning, readers can see how the father tries to get attention and that the other family members are not very interested in his efforts. This could make the reader think that this kind of behaviour happens often and everyone is tired of it. On the right-hand side of the spread, the reader can see that the family reached the zoo and there is a long line at the entrance. The people standing in the line have animal body parts – horns, a peak, and lizard legs – and the cashier is an otter. This is the first indication that this is not a regular picturebook. The cashier’s mouth is wide open and the father’s loud tone can be guessed from the speech bubble. It does not seem like a positive situation. The mother is standing a little bit further from the rest of the family which could indicate that she is embarrassed by the whole situation. The text reveals that the father was trying to cheat while buying the tickets when he had no right for it. This shows that the father is selfish and tries to turn things in his favour whenever possible.

The picture on the left-hand side shows the family walking in the zoo and one of the boys is climbing on a signpost. In the speech bubbles both parents tell the boy to come down. The reactions of the parents are completely different. The reader can see that the mother is caring and father is strict, it is like they are the two sides of a coin. This kind of difference between two parents is quite common, although maybe not as clearly as presented here. People in the background, who are watching an animal in a cage, have animal body parts as if the author wants to indicate that animals are looking at animals. The text tells us that while walking around, the boys wanted to look at the gorilla and monkeys but they had to see the 'boring' animals first. In the text, there was no indication about the situation with the signpost, so the picture and the text present different information about what is happening. On the right-hand side of the spread there is an elephant in a cage. The colours of the cage are dull, there is light coming from the ceiling and the elephant is alone. The cage looks dirty as there are feces on the ground. The text says that the elephant house smelled badly and that the elephant was only eating. Although when you take a closer look at the picture there is no food near the elephant. It is possible that the food is outside the picture or that the elephant in the picture has already eaten it. The reader can sense disappointment from the way the narrator expresses himself.

On the left-hand side, we can see a picture of the father. He is in the foreground and there are clouds behind him which make it seem like he has horns. He has a stern look on his face and it seems like he is looking down on someone. This visual angle could be the one of the narrator's who is being told off by the father. From the text the reader learns that the boys were hungry and wanted to eat the chocolate that their mother had brought with her. The father did not allow it without explaining his decision. The way the father is presented and the manner in which he speaks indicate that he is trying to have control over the family even if his actions are not justified. In the picture on the right-hand side, the reader can see two giraffes in their cage. There is a brick wall behind the giraffes so that they almost blend into it. The giraffes are

standing as close to the building as possible and one of them has its head inside of it as if they want to get as far from the people as possible.

On the left-hand side of the spread, the father and the sons are with their backs to the reader leaning on a fence and looking at something. One of the boys is climbing on the fence. There is chocolate and chocolate paper on the ground next to the father. It could be assumed that the father was the one who threw it on the ground. The speech bubble shows the father calling out to the tiger. The reader finds out from the text that they are looking at a tiger who is pacing in its cage. It also tells the reader that the mother feels for the tiger while the father makes a nasty remark about the tiger's teeth. As could be seen from the text, while the mother is emphatic the father is only able to say negative things. On the right-hand side of the spread, we can see a magnificent tiger in a cage. Behind the tiger there are patches of green grass but other than that the cage looks miserable. Outside the cage, the grass is vibrantly green and buxom. There also is a butterfly which has the similar pattern to the tiger, but inversely to the tiger it is free. It could indicate that the grass is greener on the other side meaning that the tiger longs to be freed from the cage. Although the butterfly and the tiger have the same pattern they certainly do not have the same life conditions.

In the picture on the left-hand side of the spread, the boys are fighting, their arms are wrapped around each other and they are bent towards the ground. Both of them are telling the other to let go. The situation is rather typical when it comes to the relationship between siblings. It also shows how stubborn both of them are. The text reveals that the boys are still hungry, for them it seems like they have been there for hours but their mother says that they just got there. Once again, the narrator is told off by the father. In this situation, the mother is trying to solve the problem in a sensible way by explaining but the father once again comes in strong and ends the discussion. On the right-hand side of the spread there is rhino in a cage who seems to be walking off the picture. The colours used to depict the cage are dull and do not have any life to

it. There are only two rocks in the cage and therefore it looks empty. In the background, the reader can see rooftops of skyscrapers, which are pointy and shiny. The cage looks morbid and lifeless.

In the next picture on the left-hand side of the spread, the reader can see the father laughing so hard that his face is red, his mouth wide open and tears are coming out of his eyes. From the text the reader finds out that the father made a joke and this is the reason why he is laughing. The text does not indicate that any other family member laughed at his joke and this could also be concluded from the fact that only the father is visible in the picture. In the picture on the right-hand side of the spread there are penguins. This is the first cage in this picturebook which has more than one animal in it. The cage is white with some black elements (like a ladder on the wall and a fence in the upper part of the picture) which makes it seem a little bit better than the previous cages but as previously it does not have anything else in the cage. Although the water looks really blue in the picture the fact that none of the penguins swim in it could indicate that it has some kind of chemicals in it to keep it ‘clean’.

On the left-hand side of the spread, there is a picture of the boys smiling. They are wearing hats which look like monkeys and which were not present earlier. The boys have rashes on their faces. This could mean that they have been eating too much sugar or they have fought once again. The background of the picture is black, which means that the reader is not able to see anything besides them. It looks like the author wants the attention to be only on the boys. The text reveals what the boys had in the café and it is rather a lot for a small child. After the café, the characters went to the gift shop and the boys spent their pocket money on monkey hats. After they bought the hats the father makes a joke by asking “Which one is the monkey?” and the reader can sense how annoyed the narrator was. On the right-hand side of the spread, there is a polar bear’s cage. There seems to be a cage in the wall which could be the polar bear’s hideout. The ground is white and trying to imitate snow. The water in the cage looks greenish-

yellow and you can see the reflection of the polar bear in the water. The polar bear seems to be in motion, but it does not seem happy. The narrator then comments on going to see the polar bear by saying that it looked stupid walking up and down in its cage. From this comment, the reader could presume that the polar bear was either bored or bothered by something which made him walk from one end of the cage to the other.

On the left-hand side of the spread, there is a picture, which shows the mother and two sons behind the cage. The picture is probably depicted from the inside of the cage. The mother is in the foreground looking at the animals in the cage. Her face is neutral and the readers could not get any emotions from her. In the background, the brothers are fighting, again. The brothers look paler than they did in the previous spread. The mother is standing with her back to the children which could mean that she is tired of the boys fighting all the time. There is no sign of the father in the picture. On the right-hand side of the spread there is a picture of baboons – there are three baboons sitting closely together and the middle baboon has his mouth wide open as if it is screaming. There is one baboon walking out of the picture on the higher level of the cage. The colour scheme of the cage is grey and there is nothing but the surfaces in there. It seems like the baboons are sitting on the edge and the reader could see that some kind of fluids have run down the edge, which makes the cage look dirty. The narrator then tells the reader that they went to see the baboons who in his opinion were more interesting. It could be that the narrator found the baboons more interesting because he was able to associate with them. He points out that he was fighting with his brother and their mother made a remark by saying that the baboons reminded of someone but she could not figure out who. It is obvious that the mother is being sarcastic and is talking about her sons.

On the left-hand side of the spread, there are many kinds of people, for example a punk, a man with a hat, a man taking a picture, a woman who looks like a cat, a baby in a costume etc. In the foreground, we can see the main characters – the boys have their hand against the

glass and it seems like they are yelling; the father is hitting his wrist against the glass and he does not look pleased; the mother is standing behind the boys and her face is sad. It seems like the people in the picture are not satisfied with the situation. On the right-hand side of the spread there seems to be a big pile of hair which is the orangutan who is not showing its face to the people. The orangutan has beautiful orange hair, with quite a lot of white hair in it. The readers could presume that the orangutan is quite old. It is sitting in a corner, there are orange peels and three pieces of something lying next to it on the floor. The walls of the cage are yellow and there is a grey brick-wall which has a shaft or something like that in it. The narrator tells the reader that the orangutan was in a corner and did not respond whatever they tried to do. The narrator calls the orangutan a “miserable thing”.

On the left-hand side of the spread, you can see the family watching someone behind the fence. The father appears even bigger in the picture as he is banging his wrists against his chest and making sounds. The brothers are on the fence and smiling, they are obviously happy. The mother is behind them and seems smaller in this picture than ever before, her eyes are really sad and the corners of her mouth are turned downwards. It seems like the father and the sons are trying to get the animals attention. On the right-hand side of the spread, there is a picture of a gorilla, which is split into four pieces. It could be that it is presented like this in order to emphasise being behind bars. The gorilla is drawn in great detail. The gorilla is looking at the family with a neutral expression, as if it does not care about the noise they are making. The narrator tells us that they finally reached the gorillas who were quite good. He says that his father did the King-Kong expression but they were the only ones there. It seems like the narrator is constantly embarrassed by the way his father acts in public. We find out that they drove home after seeing the gorilla and their mother asked about their best bit of the day. The boys' favourites were the monkey hats and going to the café and the father said that going home was his favourite bit. None of their answers had anything to do with the animals in the zoo and we

never found out what was the mother's favourite, although she expresses that in her opinion animals are not meant for animals but for people.

On the left-hand side of the spread, there is a picture of the narrator sitting on the floor of what seems like a cage as there is light coming from the left and shows shadows of the bars on the wall and ceiling. The narrator has his hand on his knees and is bent forward. There is nothing else in the cage. On the right-hand side of the spread, there is a silhouette of the zoo during night-time. Everything seems quiet and there are two birds flying, a full moon and stars in the sky. It seems as if night-time is the only time when the zoo is quiet and the animals can get rest from the people. The text reveals that the narrator saw a strange dream and asks a question whether animals have dreams. This could mean that he dreamt about being in a cage and finally understood what the animals are going through in a zoo. The final question really makes the reader think about the story in detail and what could be the message that the author tried to pass on.

## **2.4 Analysis of results**

Students were interviewed by using a semi-structured interview, after that the interviews were transcribed and analysed. The interviews were re-read multiple times and drawn together by questions. Hence, in this chapter the data is presented and analysed while taking a look at the questions in the order of their appearance in the interview.

The first two questions were about the cover of the book. First, the interviewer asked whether the cover of the book seemed appealing to them. Majority of the students answered that they would not read the picturebook based on its cover. They explained their answer by saying that "it's boring", "it seems strange", "because the dad looks weird and the mum looks like a child", "because I don't read this kind of books", "because it's ugly and those people are ugly", "it's not really interesting" and "because the dad is weird". As could be seen from their



answers the students were not fond of the father and the picturebook in general seemed boring to them. During the interviews and prior to them the interviewer already understood that students thought that picturebooks were meant for children and therefore are childish. Two of the students were indecisive about whether they would read the picturebook based on the cover. They explained themselves in connection to the family portrait. For example, one of them said that the family portrait reminded him of his own family – he also has an older brother and that his father is a little bit overweight. Therefore, these two students relied on their personal experience and were able to reflect on another level. A few students automatically answered “I do not know”, their answers came rather quickly and therefore it could be that they did not even think about it. The interviewer then encouraged them to express whatever they thought about the following questions and emphasised that there are no right or wrong answers. It might have been that the students were just scared because they had not done anything like this before.

The second question about the cover of the picturebook concentrated on the colours used on the cover. Students were asked about their first association with this colour combination and the students replied that it reminded them of a zebra. While talking about the author’s intention, four students thought that the combination was chosen because it is a picturebook about a zoo and the stripes represent it best. Students also suggested that this could have been the easiest and cheapest way to make a cover or that it was designed to catch attention for example on a shelf at the library. Student 4 gave a really detailed explanation which is the following:

“you know like black and white are really classic and so it put the picture in the front like really the thing that catches your eye and in the back there is just like some pattern if there was like bright colours and you would be like kind of throw off”

It is interesting to see how she connected black and white with being the classical colours and analysed the relationship between the background and the family picture in the middle. She sees the connection between black and white pictures emphasising or framing the main picture, which is colourful and also brings out that if the background was colourful as well

then it would push readers away. While giving her answer she started to ramble a little bit and some of the sentence endings are cut off in the author's recordings, but her overall interpretation is still understandable.

The following two questions could be considered to be warm-up questions to let student's imagination open up. First, students were asked to express their thoughts about the hamster in a cage and to comment on the author's intentions by putting it there. Four students replied that they did not know why the author had decided to draw a hamster in a cage. Four students associated the drawing to animals in the zoo and how it represented that. One of the students commented that it could be that the author wanted to start the story with smaller animals. Three students saw a connection between the family and the hamster, they thought that it was the family's hamster who was left behind. The connections between the actual zoo and the family show that students were able to create their own backstory without much information about what was actually happening. While answering the question, they mostly based on their own previous knowledge with similar situations and their imagination.

The fourth question was about the snail flying in mid-air above the traffic jam. The snail is only visible in the picture and it has not been mentioned in the text. Hence, students were supposed to use their imagination and previous knowledge to answer the question. Some of the students did not even notice the snail before it was pointed out to them. Which could indicate that they did not read the picturebook thoroughly. Eight students associated the snail with the traffic and said that the latter is even slower than the snail. One of the students brought out that "everyone is angry", meaning that she was also able to interpret people's emotions in the picture. One of the students thought that a car had ran over the snail and this is why it was flying in the air, which shows that his imagination was thinking beyond the picture. One of the students said that because it is a weird picturebook, it made sense to have a snail flying even if it cannot do it in real life. The student therefore was able to separate the reality from the situation in the

picturebook. One of the students thought that the illustrator was just bored and that is why the snail is in the picture. In this case the student tried to put himself in the author's shoes and tried to understand the action better.

The next question focused on whether students were able to see significant details in the picture. The family had reached the zoo and were buying the tickets from the cashier. There are a lot of people in the queue and each person has something peculiar about them. Students noticed that they look like animals meaning that they have animal body parts. They then listed the animal body parts they could see by mentioning horns (8 students), beaks (5 students, one of them referred to it as a "bird nose" at first), frog legs (3 students, one of them referred to them as "feet"), crocodile or lizard legs, a lion, fangs, a tiger, a frog, a *karu* (Estonian for a bear), animal legs and abnormal shoes. While answering the question about the author's intentions most of the students made a connection with the sentence said by the mother in the end of the picturebook. They noted that the author wants to show that the zoo is really meant for humans and not for animals. This could be interpreted from the following answers:

"not sure ... maybe to kind of make a scenario when where animals visit animals" (student 1)

"to show that people are like animals" (student 5)

"I read the last part and there was like I think the zoo is for the people like something like that" (student 7)

"maybe because in the end of the book the ... says that the zoo is not for animals but for people" (student 8)

Therefore, the students are not just thinking about the author's intentions put they are also creating connections throughout the story itself. One of the students also mentioned that maybe the author wanted to make it more interesting for the reader and see how long it would take to realise what is really in the pictures.

As the family is walking around in the zoo one of the boys decides to climb on a sign pole. The parents both react to it and the students were able to see the difference in their reactions. While describing the father's reaction, students used the following adjectives: aggressive, harsh, mean, strict, angry (3 students), attempting to be funny and odd. Therefore,

the students saw the father as a negative character. When describing the mother, the students used the following adjectives: caring, careful (2 students), patient, comforting, protective, boring and calm. The students saw the mother as a positive character. Students were able to characterise the two people based on their body language, emotions and text. They saw that the two people were very different and that the relationship between the two was not the good.

When the family reaches the orangutan's cage, the picture shows how people visiting the zoo are making noise in order to get the orangutan's attention. Their efforts seem to be in vain because the image only shows the orangutan's back. When asked why they think the orangutan is not showing its face, the students were able to form their answers based on the body language of the orangutan but also the behaviour of people. Most of the students thought that the orangutan is tired of people constantly trying to get its attention and does not want to be bothered. It was brought out that because of the constant slamming the orangutan might think that people want to harm it. Student 5 commented on the picture from the author's point of view when she said that the face of an orangutan is too difficult to draw. Student 6 answer to the two questions sums up the overall opinion about the picture when she said:

“the people wants the attention of the orangutan but the orangutan don't want to show it to the people because he is it is really tired about that every day hundreds of people walk past its box or something and wants to be alone than not everyone can see it ... it's feeling very sad or angry because it does not enjoy its life like it would enjoy its life in the wild world”

She is able to explicitly describe the situation, give reasons and also comment on how the orangutan could be feeling in a situation like this. Students mostly used adjectives such as scared, (really really) sad (5 students), embarrassed, tired, angry, afraid, shy, disturbed and dead to describe how the orangutan is feeling. Students' answers were mostly negative side of the spectrum and from their answers it could be interpreted that they felt sorry for the orangutan. Student 10 even brought out that “his, like, personal space has been invaded or something, he does not feel comfortable or maybe he has enough brains to, like, define the zoo”. This approach is interesting because the student gives credit to the animal and brings out that probably the

animal understands the situation it is in. The student has given the orangutan a gender although grammatically speaking one should refer to as 'it'. Student 9 also commented on the colours used in the picture by asking whether the orangutan's hair is grey or the picture has been scratched. This shows that he was able to notice the tiniest details in the picture and tried to convey meaning to it but was not sure about himself.

The gorilla picture is a bit different from other pictures in the book. While the rest of the pictures depict animals from a distance, the drawing of the gorilla focusses on its face and is drawn in great detail. This did not go unnoticed by the students. Student 1 said that the picture "is very in depth" and student 10 said that "the art style is different like it is more realistic and you can see the individual hairs". Three students described the feeling that they got from the gorilla and used adjectives such as sad and depression, indicating that the overall tone of the picture is negative. One of the students mentioned Harambe, while looking at the picture of the gorilla (Harambe was a gorilla, who lived in Cincinnati Zoo and was killed after an incident with a child in 2016, prompting the birth of a viral Internet meme.). It is interesting to note that the students did not think about the gorilla as just another animal but took the anthropomorphic position that the gorilla might have the ability to think and experience feelings just like humans. This process of thought was also displayed by student 10 in his take on the picture of an orangutan when she mentioned that the orangutan might not be as smart as humans but they still have consciousness. She described that there is twinkling in its eyes, which for her means that there is something going on in the orangutan's brain.

The gorilla picture and the last two pictures in the picturebook combined together in the discussion about the author's intentions. The majority of the students said that the author wanted to show how miserable the animals are in the zoo and that they should not be kept in a cage. A phrase, which was said by multiple students was "life is better wild"; therefore, the students felt like the animals should be released from the zoos. It was also brought out that the author wanted

the readers to feel empathy towards the animals whom in a way are bullied by people every day. While looking at the picture of the narrator sitting on the floor students thought that the narrator seemed sad after visiting the zoo and maybe he saw a dream about being in a cage which scared him. Most of the students thought that the author's intention was to create a scenario in which the people would start to think whether they would like to be kept in a cage and to be constantly annoyed by others.

After the discussion of the picturebook, students were asked to choose their favourite picture and explain why they liked it the most. Three students chose the gorilla picture. Two of them said that they like the picture because it really shows the emotions of the gorilla and the third student said that the picture in general is very well done and looks nice. The picture is really realistic and it is the biggest presentation of an animal in the picturebook. The reason why students brought out the visibility of the emotions is that in the case of other animals the reader cannot really see the animal's emotions in detail. It could be assumed that they are not happy in the pictures but the reader cannot be sure. It is also good to see that the students appreciated the artist's work and were not afraid to express it.

Three students chose the picture of the father laughing as their favourite because "he looks stupid", "it looks funny and it looks like he is from hell" and "because it shows what a dad-joke usually is – the dad finds it really funny, but, and like, you know he's in tears, but the others probably did not find it [and] just found it annoying". It is interesting that they chose this as their favourite picture. Students were not keen on the father of the family in the story. Most of the students found him loathsome and had a negative attitude towards him. Nevertheless, the fact that the father looks ridiculous in this picture could help explain why they liked this picture the most.

Two students mentioned the last pictures in the picturebook as their favourite because they explained the story about how the animals feel in the zoo. While thinking about the story

it seems logical that these two were picked as their favourite. The reader is able to appreciate and understand the story the best when all the details are presented and there are no more surprises. The last two pictures do not have as much noise in them so this could also be one of the reasons, the pictures are calm and pleasing to the eye.

Two students picked the picture of the penguins as their favourite picture. One of them, a girl, thought that the picture was colourful and that is what she liked about it and the other student, a boy, thought that the ladder in the picture looked stupid and unnecessary and that is why he liked it the most.

One of the students chose the picture of the elephant as her favourite picture. She gave a rather lengthy explanation for her choice:

“ I like the elephant one ... because it's like to me it's like being in school like like you have some kind of like *nagu see valgus on siis see huvi õppimisest* but it's like so boring because like I know already so much stuff because I think a lot and it's just the case like I don't learn anything new ... well sometimes I do not because I like *ma ei peagi nagu teadma kõike* ... not like a cage but it's like the law tells you that you have to like study for nine years and *õppekavad on ka nagu ette antud* ... like you cannot choose anything *nagu valikaine ka ainult matemaatika ja sellised aga nagu* you don't need maths when you want to be some kind of artist and like study something cultural or something like that”

It is interesting to see that she made such a strong connection with the school system in Estonia with the picture of an elephant in a cage. She associates the light with the interest in learning, but at the same time she exaggerates by saying that she is not learning anything new. Her attitude glimmered through thought out the interview, although it should be mentioned and she and one boy were the only students who constantly struggled to find words in English and often expressed themselves in Estonian. In some ways the connection between the school and the picture of an elephant could be seen, but the rest of the explanation about the choice in subject could be seen as her way of expressing her opinion which is not connected to the picture itself.

Students were also asked about their preferences when it comes to watching TV or playing video games. At first the students hesitated before answering the question, which might be due to the fact that the question was too broad for them. After specifying question three boys

mentioned that they play computer games which are based on shooting. Since the overall knowledge is that children play a lot of computer games then this answer was expected to be present more, to the authors surprise only three boys mentioned computer games. Two of the girls mentioned playing computer games, one of them mentioned SIMS 4 and the other described a strategy game and one of the girls mentioned playing games on her phone. From students' replies it seems like they watch more TV than play games. TV shows mentioned during the interview included the Simpsons, the Big Bang Theory (2x), Family Guy (2x), Animal Planet, the Medium, *Kättemaksukontor* and anime. Although the author of the thesis was familiar with the students it was still interesting to find out what kind of TV shows the students preferred to watch.

After the students had told about their preferences, they were asked whether any of those media helped with reading pictures. Most of the students agreed that consuming other kinds of media helps them to understand the pictures better, although half of the students did not specifically explain in which way they are useful. The students mentioned that different kind of media can inspire you to consume more, that crime shows inspire you to look for clues everywhere and in general expand your creative thinking. Student 1 gave an interesting answer to the question:

“I believe that some of the cartoons do actually ... because they are animated ... and you have to well if you can't really understand what's going on then you just take a more in depth look at it so that kind of helps you with the pictures and understand them better”

He explains how cartoons help you to go through the process of understanding the pictures better. He makes the connection between the two types of book because they both have quite a lot of pictures in them. He does not specifically say how the cartoons help him to understand the pictures better, but the fact that he brings out the re-reading could indicate that he is willing to take a look at the cartoon/picturebook multiple times in order to convey meaning and does not give up that easily.



At the beginning of the interview, the interviewer asked whether the students would read the picturebook based on the cover of the book and most of the students said that they would not read it. After browsing through the picturebook, students were asked whether they would say that *Zoo* is a good book and the answers were the opposite compared to their initial response about the picturebook. Students were positively inclined and thought that the book has real meaning to it. They brought out that it shows how animals feel in the zoo and makes you realise how lucky humans are and how much more rights we have compared to animals. Two students mentioned pictures of people pointing at animals and student 10 went as far as to compare the situation between humans and animals with how humans sometimes treat other humans:

“in some context it reminds me of the society like some people are closed off and others are mocking them like the orangutan like why are you not moving why you sleeping and why are you not showing your face but it is actually making the orangutan feel really bad and like punished by something but it's not their fault”

She was able to employ the situation from the picturebook with real life. The situation she describes could be compared to bullying. She was able to understand that bullying affect the person badly and makes them feel sad even though it is not their fault. In this case the exterior influencer is the one who is influencing the inner world of a person.

All the students thought that the pictures in the picturebook were well done. Students brought out that they could understand what the author wanted to say, the author drew well and the pictures were meaningful but funny, detailed and interesting to follow. When asked about the way the author uses colour and body language then students brought out the characteristics of the parents and other humans, colours and human-animal comparison. Student 1 said that the father “seemed to have a very aggressive face and the mother seemed to have a tired face and the boys were just basically fighting all the time”. Student 5 brought out that the father went through a series of emotions throughout the picturebook and the mother was emotionless. Three students mentioned that there were animal body parts on humans. Three students described the

relationship between the humans and animals in the zoo. For example, student 11 said that the author “tried to make it look like the animals are nice ones in the zoo and the humans are the bad ones”. Student 4 talked about the relationship between the two while bringing in the colour scheme, she said “like it’s mostly bright colours but like in the animal cages it’s kind of darker just to kind of show that the people are having fun but the animals are not”. When answering the question, some of the students focused only on the body language and did not comment on the colours used in the picturebook. Some of the students commented on the colours as well and one of them said that the colours in the book were “more of a pastel colours”, “not too bright nor too dark”, “bright colours” and “some pictures were really colourful”.

Ten out of eleven students found pictures more interesting than words in the case of this picturebook. For example, student 1 said that “in this book they had a better story than the actual story written here”. Student 2 and 7 said that the pictures and text told two different stories. Student 2 explained that the text was about how people were in a zoo watching animals, but the pictures showed that there were animals watching other animals. On the other hand, student 5 said that the pictures “let your imagination grow”. She explained that some people do not have the “visual thinking so the pictures and colours they make you feel more”. What she means by that is that the pictures help readers develop their visual literacy. She also added that the story the pictures tell varies with each person because we do not think the same way and our views on the world are different. Altogether four students thought that the pictures show more than words do, two of them brought out the old saying, “a picture says a thousand words” and talked about how you could see the emotions from the pictures and could not have as clear a manifestation of the same based on the text. Student 4 found that both were okay and she could not see how one could be better than the other, she added “I think the pictures like kind of match with the text but the pictures have their own backstory” We could conclude from her answer that the stories told by the text and pictures are slightly different but they still complement each

other. An interesting thought that sums up all the different ideas was said by student 10 when she said that “it depends on how much you focus on the words or the pictures”.

Subsequently, students were asked whether the words would still be good without the pictures. Already based on the previous question, one could presume that they could not exist without pictures because the students interviewed were really fond of the pictures. Only one student out of eleven said that they would be good and she explained that she would still have her imagination to rely on. Others thought that they would not be good without the pictures, reasoning that they would not be able to understand the real meaning behind the story and that it would not touch them as much.

When asked whether the pictures would be good without words, eight students answered “yes” while bringing out explanations like “the pictures would look even funnier”, “it is still have their like meaning behind them” and “you can tell they’re in the zoo and like something is going on”. Therefore, the students felt like they could still interpret some kind of a story from the pictures and they would be satisfied with it. The rest of the students said that the pictures would not be good without the words. One of the students explained that the pictures would be just a mess without the words. Based on the answers provided, the students overwhelmingly felt that both the text and the pictures are needed for optimal comprehension.

At the end of the interview, students were asked whether they have seen this picturebook before and none of the students had seen it before. Eight students said that it does not remind them of any other picturebooks. Other things, which reminded them of this picturebook, were mentioned, such as a poetry book and a film. Students were given a chance to say anything they wanted about the picturebook. Students mentioned that the picturebook was good and that they should not judge the book by its cover. Many students brought out their concern for the mother, which shows how emotionally involved they were while reading the picturebook.

In general, the students left the interviews with a different attitude than the one they had started the interviews. Their views on the picturebook changed throughout the discussion and they started to notice details in the picturebook. During the discussion it could be seen that the students understood the story in a different level and one of the students even commented in the end how this storyline might not be understood by younger readers. The author of the thesis feels that the picturebook and the discussion made the students think about an important social issue and changed the way students viewed picturebooks.

## 2.5 Discussion

One of the purposes of this thesis was to compare the current study to the study conducted by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles. The following section gives an overview of the similarities and differences of the students' interpretations of the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne. It is important to emphasise that the students of the current study learn English as a second language and although a lot of the students in Arizpe and Styles' study did not speak English as their mother tongue, they were still living in an English-speaking country. The discussion follows Arizpe and Styles' presentation of the results presented in the collection of articles published in 2003.

While looking at the cover of the book, similarly to Arizpe and Styles' study, the first association the students had was "zebras". A student in Arizpe and Styles' study brought out that for him the zebra stripes symbolised the zoo, this idea was also present in this study while two students referred to the similar connection. Students in the current study focused more on the fact that black and white wavy lines were chosen in order to draw peoples' attention to the picturebook. Arizpe and Styles also mentioned the connection between black and white lines and the bars of the cages, which was not mentioned by any of the students in the current study. I would say that the students of the current study looked at the cover and did not search for an

extraordinary association because they are not used to having to interpret the pictures on a deeper level. Arizpe and Styles also brought out that the cover already suggests that the story is not going to be a conventional one, but students in the current study thought to opposite. One of the students even said that the family portrait on the cover reminded him of his own family. The answers provided by students in the current study suggest that they did not find the cover of the book to be an indication of anything unconventional.

Arizpe and Styles brought out that most students conveyed an understanding that animals should not be in a zoo, although the narrator's text does not imply this explicitly, except in the mother's last comment. Students in the current study also emphasised that the author of the picturebook is really against zoos and wants to show how awful life is for animals kept in captivity. A number of students felt that the author's idea was to make the readers think what they would do if they were in a similar situation. Arizpe and Styles (2003) conclude that in order for the students to interpret the picturebook in this manner they are able to understand irony and convey moral ideas by looking at the pictures. The understanding that animals should not be kept in the zoo came to students early on during the discussion and they were even more convinced when we reached the end of the picturebook. Arizpe and Styles (2003) talk about irony which is said to come out when the reader notices the difference between what is in the pictures and what is said in the text. Students in the current study were able to spot it quickly and had no difficulty understanding it, although it should be mentioned that the students in the current study were older.

Arizpe and Styles talk about the visual features and mainly the use of colour. Students in both of the studies noticed that the author had drawn people while using bright colours and while drawing animals the author was using darker colours with a greyish undertone. When the students were specifically asked about the use of colours then four students brought out the difference in colours for example student 4 said: "it's mostly bright colours but like the animal

cages it's kind of darker". Similarly to Arizpe and Styles' study, one of the students commented on the colour of the butterfly and how the grass was greener outside the cage when discussing the picture of the tiger. In general, students are able to spot the difference in colour usage while looking at the individual pictures, but when they were asked about the usage of colours in the whole picturebook then they either were afraid to articulate their responses or they did not understand what was asked.

Arizpe and Styles describe students who participated in the study as very excited and enthusiastic to discuss the picturebook. The same cannot be said about the students who took part in the current study. It was quite evident that they spoke as much as they had to in order to answer the questions they were asked, but they were not able or willing to discuss the topic in greater detail. At the beginning of the interview, most students expressed the attitude that picturebooks were meant for younger children and they said that they did not read these kinds of books. While looking at the pictures, most of the students did not give a very detailed description of what they saw unless they were asked additional questions. For example, when it came to the elephant in a cage then the students often replied in a monotone voice: there is an elephant in the cage. Arizpe and Styles mentioned that by the end of the picturebook, the students became serious because of the book. The same could be said about the responses students gave in the current study. They laughed at some of the jokes during the discussion about the picturebook and found the father ridiculously funny, but in the end, they all realized that the topic discussed was rather serious. While the students in the current study do warm up to the idea of picturebooks, it seems that picturebooks have a rather negative reputation. This was also evident in the study conducted by the author of the current thesis in 2016 when students were asked about their preferences about picturebooks. Perhaps the more favourable approach of the students in the study by Arizpe and Styles can be explained by them simply being more

familiar and used to with the idea of picturebooks in schools. This is certainly something to think about while teaching visual literacy and developing study materials.

Arizpe and Styles also discussed whether the students preferred pictures or text and the results were the same as in the current study, students prefer pictures to text. In Arizpe and Styles' study, the students bring out that the text says what is happening, but the pictures show the emotions and what is really happening in the family. From the student's responses, it seems like the text is lying/hiding the truth from the readers and the pictures are telling the truth. Students in the current study highlighted that the book seems to contain two different stories. While talking about the relationships evident in the picturebook then the students had similar opinions about the matters, although the students in the current study focused more on the relationship between the people and animals in the zoo and students in Arizpe and Styles' study focused more on the relationship within the family. Although they spent unequal time on the matter both of them were still discussed by the students.

Arizpe and Styles talk about the complexity of some of the pictures in the picturebook. They mention the situation which takes place at the beginning of the story while the family is on their way to the zoo. They end up in a traffic jam and there is a snail in mid-air. Arizpe and Styles mention that adults tend to understand that the snail is there in order to show how slow the traffic is instantly but that this could be difficult for the students to interpret. They presented examples from the responses they received from students, which said, for example, that the author wanted to have more things in the book or that the snail was there to indicate that you should turn the page. In the current study, most of the students understood the implication of a slow traffic instantly. There were only a few students who thought otherwise and proposed, for example, that some car ran over the snail and that is why it is mid-air. The reason why students in the current study were able to understand the meaning behind this particular incident could

be the fact that they were a little bit older in the time of the interviews than the students in Arizpe and Styles' study.

Students experienced empathy towards the animals while trying to encompass the moral of the story. While looking at the answers by students in the current study, I would agree with Arizpe and Styles when they say that students noticed the suffering of the animals and they disapproved of the way people behaved in the zoo. Students brought out that people in the zoo were trying to imitate the animals and the animals were not happy about it. A phrase that several students used was "life is better wild", which really goes to show that in the students' opinion, animals should not be kept in a zoo and that the students are able to look at the situation critically. Another perspective that is similar to Arizpe and Styles' findings and supports this argument is the way students commented on the surroundings – while describing the pictures, students often made comments about that dirty-looking pools or trash on the pavement and floor. As Arizpe and Style point out, there is nothing in the text which suggests the poor conditions in the zoo. Students can only get this impression from the pictures, meaning that the students interviewed for this study have the ability to read pictures and understand the greater meaning behind them. In Arizpe and Styles' study, students drew their own pictures in response to the picturebook and they discussed the morality of the picturebook through those pictures. They mention that from the students' pictures the situation in which animals and humans switched roles was evident. Although students did not draw pictures in this study, most of them still expressed the view that the two pictures influenced them to think about the situation in which animals and humans would change places. This means that students are able to feel empathy towards the animals.

The text does not pass on the complete set of emotions that the characters of the story go through while at the zoo, but the pictures are more elaborate in this aspect and the students are able to interpret them in detail. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the students in Arizpe and



Styles' and also in the current study noticed the differences between the father and the mother in the story. Arizpe and Styles present interpretations of two students in whose opinion the mother looks sad and the reason is that she does not want the animals to be in the zoo. The interpretations are similar to the responses students expressed in the current study. The emotion students think the mother is feeling is largely based on the pictures. Her because her face is always straight or even sad and she does not show any other emotions. However, the student's take on the mood of the mother is more likely to be based on a statement the mother makes in the text about how the animals should not be kept in a zoo. The combination of pictures and text is what finally allows the reader to put piece everything together and neither element could convey the same level of meaning without the other.

Throughout the picturebook, readers get the impression that the animals feel lonely due to the fact that most of the animals were by themselves in the book. When it comes to the gorilla picture, Arizpe and Styles feel like the author wanted to emphasise the issue on an even deeper lever. Arizpe and Styles then go on and present the interpretation of a girl who has humanised the orangutan and discusses the situation from that point of view. On the other hand, most of the students in the current study mentioned that the orangutan is not showing its face because of the way people act near its cage. They said that the orangutan is sad, scared, embarrassed, tired of people, afraid of humans, shy and disturbed. The students were able to interpret how the orangutan was feeling without seeing its face and even explain why they think it is feeling like that. I would say that this highlights how well the students are able to interpret body language. The students were able to guess how the animal was feeling just by looking at the picture of the orangutan who had its back to the reader.

In their discussion of visual imagery, Arizpe and Styles first talk about the frames of the pictures in which the animals are depicted and how it seems to put the animals in double cages.

This is an interesting perspective, but it did not come up once in the discussion with the students in the current study.

While discussing posture and body language, students in Arizpe and Styles' study mention the dominance of the father in the family, who is visually and verbally depicted as a bigger and louder person. The students in the current study took notice of this. Similarly to Arizpe and Styles' study, they point out that the father is more dominant and the mother is inferior. I asked an additional question from the students so that they would compare the two characters a little bit more and the general feeling was that the father is strict and harsh while the mother is quiet and caring.

Arizpe and Styles' study was carried out among students of different ages and therefore they were able to bring out the differences how the students analysed the picture while looking at their age. It certainly is interesting to see how students in different ages are able to see and articulate their answers and therefore see their progress. In the case of the current study the answers students gave were similar and I was not able to see a great difference among students.

While discussing the picture of the gorilla, Arizpe and Styles talk about symbolism and how the fact that the picture is divided into four pieces could be a reference to church and have religious meaning behind. This concept goes unnoticed by the students in most cases. One of the students in their study came close to this revelation, but the interviewer helped him along a little bit. Similarly, five students in the current study talked about how the lines separating the smaller images reminded them once again that the animals were in cages. In general, while looking at this particular picture, students mostly concentrated on the emotions they saw in the picture. Students brought out that the style of this picture was more realistic than in the other pictures and that you could actually see the individual hairs on the gorilla. This could indicate that there is a lot that the students could still learn and that there is another level, which could be discussed while looking at the picturebook.

In conclusion, there were a lot of similarities when it comes to students' interpretations about the picturebook and it was interesting to compare the results of the two studies. In the beginning the author of the thesis was afraid that the differences between the two studies are going to be too big, but as it came out in the end students thought in a similar way.

While taking a look at the results of the current study and the results presented by Arizpe and Styles the author found that this picturebook could be used in a language classroom in order to spark conversation about an important social issue. What the current study lacks is group discussion, which would give the students another opportunity to talk about the topic and find out what other students thought about the topic. The author of the thesis also feels that there could have been exercises which concentrate on the language used in the picturebook, this way even if students are not able to articulate their answers they would have an opportunity to broaden their vocabulary by introducing literary devices and listen to other while they discuss the picturebook. All this was not present in the current study because of lack of time and the author's inexperience to carry out a bigger-scale study.

## Conclusion

It is generally believed that picturebooks are meant for children to teach them to create associations between the numerous things they are not able to physically see yet, but which they might encounter in the future. Although this simple approach is true in many cases, there are also picturebooks, which demand extremely active reading (Arizpe and Styles 2003). Nowadays, we live in a visually complex world and the ability to read from left-to-right is no guarantee for successful communication (Seglem and Witte 2009). At this point, we should not overestimate the abilities of today's children. The fact that they are growing up in this visually complex world does not make them automatically visually literate (Pantaleo 2015). They need to be taught how to interpret the visual information they encounter. According to different scholars (Avgerinou and Ericson 1997; Stokes 2001; Roche 2015) 'visual literacy' is first and foremost a means of communication – it starts with thinking about the image, creating a meaning, reproducing the information in a verbal or visual way and enjoying the result. Sophisticated picturebooks could be used in order to develop visual literacy.

The current thesis is based on the study which was conducted by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles and published in a collection of articles in 2003. The main objective of their thesis was to explore how students interpret picturebooks, what kind of skills children need in order to engage with the visual text and to understand the scope of children's visual literacy. The 84 students participating in the study were aged 4-11 from three different schools in the South of England. The study consisted of individual interviews, group discussions and drawing in response to three picturebooks written by Anthony Browne and Satoshi Kitamura. The findings were qualitatively analysed using the categories of perception and levels of interpretation. Children in Kate Rabey's class drew in response to the picturebook and Kate brought out that although the students were young they were still able to interpret, understand and communicate

visuals. Arizpe and Styles were pleased with the results of the study. The students were able to read and interpret pictures, convey meaning and were emotionally engaged with the picturebook.

Teaching English as a foreign language is always developing and alongside with the development of technology, we as language teachers are searching for different ways to teach English. Enever (2006) brings out that nowadays concentrating on reading and learning vocabulary is secondary and re-telling stories had become more important. Different scholars have included picturebooks in their language lessons in different ways. Kaminski (2013) was interested in seeing how students responded to a picturebook after a storytelling session after which the students were encouraged to comment about the picturebook. Kaminski (2013) noted that students relied on images for understanding and that the experience of learning a foreign language was more joyful. Sandie Mourão (2013) used a picturebook with teenagers to make them appreciate visuals and develop their language skills. The students first read the story together, then discussed the relationship between image and text and in conclusion had to write a summary about the picturebook. Although Mourão's students were sceptical about the picturebook she concluded that the experience was enjoyable and the students realised the importance between images and text. Hsiang-Ni Lee (2015) concentrated on how students responded to picturebooks and how they evaluated the effectiveness of picturebooks while learning English. Students took part in pre-reading activities, vocabulary activities, reading the picturebook and after-reading activities. They also answered open-ended questions about the picturebook. In conclusion, students had a positive attitude towards picturebooks and found them helpful in their studies. In Estonia, there have been two studies conducted about picturebooks. Annika Apuhtin (2014) defended her master's thesis in which she compiled a study material for developing students' vocabulary and grammar based on a picturebook. As a result, the students thought that the study material made their lessons interesting and the pictures

helped in understanding the story. The author of his thesis (2016) defended her bachelor's thesis in which her objective was to understand how students thought about picturebooks and what were their preferences. BA study revealed that the students were not fond of the picturebooks, but they considered the image and text relationship to be important and prefer picturebooks in which the characters were roughly the same age as themselves.

The objective of this case study was to find out how students interpret the picturebook *Zoo* by Anthony Browne, how they see the relationship between images and text, and how they understand the moral of the picturebook. *Zoo* by Anthony Browne is a picturebook about a family's outing to a zoo. While looking at the cover, it seems like a regular visit to the zoo, but images and text convey an important moral about whether the animals should be kept in a zoo and how people behave while visiting the zoo. In order to collect information, the author carried out interviews with 11 students aged 13-14 at a rather large secondary school on the outskirts of the capital of Estonia. Prior to the interview students had uninterrupted time to read the picturebook, after which they were asked to describe the picturebook and the interviewer asked semi-structured questions about the picturebook. The interviews were transcribed and qualitatively analysed. At the beginning of the interview most of the students said that they would not read the picturebook based on the cover, but throughout the discussion it could be seen that some of them came to appreciate the picturebook. While asked whether they would describe it as a good book most of the students said yes, because it had a powerful meaning behind it. Students were able to interpret colours, body language and emotions depicted in the picturebook. At the beginning of the interview it seemed to the author that students either were startled by the picturebook or they were afraid to speak in English, which is why the students' first answer was "I do not know". Students were able to form their answers using English, there were only two students who struggled and therefore sometimes used Estonian to form answers. All of the students understood the moral of the story quite early on in the discussion and were

able to debate about it. The author of the thesis feels like the picturebook was able to make the students think about an important issue and change their attitude towards picturebooks.

Since the thesis is based on a study conducted by Evelyn Arizpe and Morag Styles (2003), then it was important for the author to take a look at the results of the two studies and compare them. It should be brought out that Arizpe and Styles conducted their study on a much bigger scale – they used three picturebook, the sample of their study was 84 students and they used drawings and group discussion to gather information. While taking a look at the visual features then in both of the studies students were able to interpret colours. For example, they were able to identify certain patterns (the cover of the book reminded them of a zebra) and understood the difference in using colours while looking at the animals and humans in the picturebook (animals were depicted using darker and humans in brighter colours). In the current study, most students were able to spot significant details which included trickery included by the author of the picturebook, such as a snail in the picture which represented the slowness of the traffic. Arizpe and Styles concluded that some of their younger students were not able to understand that. This difference in students' responses in the two studies could be due to the age difference of the students. Arizpe and Styles brought out that their students were enthusiastic about reading the picturebook in the beginning, but students in the current study had a rather negative attitude towards the picturebook in the beginning. In the end their views changed, the students in Arizpe and Styles study became more serious and students in the current study also took a more serious interest in the picturebook. Students in both studies felt empathy towards the animals in the picturebook and were able to identify with the animals. Altogether, most of the students were emotionally involved when discussing the picturebook and were able to interpret the relationships present in the picturebook. In conclusion, students in both studies were able to interpret the picturebook, draw their conclusions and compare different elements in the picturebook.

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## Appendix 1

### Interview questions for the picturebook *Zoo*

1. Does the cover make you want to read the book? Why? What do the black and white wavy lines suggest to you?
2. Why do you think the author chose black and white endpapers?
3. Why do you think the author showed a hamster before the story begins when it's a book about going to the zoo?
4. What do you think the snail is doing in the first picture?
5. What do you notice about the people in the queue and on the next page? Why do you think the author did that?
6. Could you comment the reactions of the parents – are they similar or different?
7. Why do you think we are not shown the orangutan's face? How do you think it is feeling?
8. What do you find interesting about the gorilla picture? Why? What do you think the author wants readers to feel about these animals in the zoo?
9. What do you think the last two pictures are about? What do you think the author wants us to feel about zoos?
10. What do you think the author wants us to feel about the family visiting the zoo?
11. What is your favourite picture? Could you show me how you read it?
12. Would you describe *Zoo* as a good book? Why?
13. Do you think the pictures are well done? Is the author a good artist? Why?
14. Do you like programmes on TV/cartoons/film/video/comics/computer games? Which do you like best?
15. Do any of those things help you with reading pictures?
16. Did you notice anything special about how the author used colour, body language?
17. Do you find the words or the pictures more interesting? Do they tell the same story in different ways? Would the words still be good without the pictures? Would the pictures still be good without the words?
18. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the book? Does *Zoo* remind you of any other picturebooks? If so, which? Have you seen this book before or is it new to you?

## **Appendix 2** Lapsevanema informeerimise ja nõusoleku vorm

### **Lugupeetud lapsevanem/hooldaja!**

Palun nõusolekut Teie lapse osalemiseks uurimistöös, mille pealkiri on “Seitsmendate klasside õpilaste tõlgendused Anthony Browne’i pildiraamatust “Zoo” - juhtumianalüüs” (“Exploring seventh-graders’ interpretations of Anthony Browne’s *Zoo* - a case study”). Uurimistöö eesmärk on vaadelda, kuidas õpilased, kes esimese võõrkeelena õpivad inglise keelt, tõlgendavad Anthony Browne’i pildiraamatut “Zoo” (“Loomaaed”).

Uurimistöös osalemine on vabatahtlik. Uurimistöö raames viiakse lapsega läbi intervjuu, mille intervjuu läbiviija diktofoniga salvestab. Intervjuu transkribeeritakse ja seda analüüsitakse. Intervjuus esitatud andmed viiakse anonüümsele kujule ning neid ei avalikustata viisil, mis võimaldaks neid seostada Teie lapse isikuga. Uurimistöö arvatav valmimisaeg on mai 2019. Seejärel on teil võimalus tööga ise tutvuda ja saada tagasisidet.

Olen nõus, et minu laps osaleb uurimistöös.

Allkiri \_\_\_\_\_

Täna koostöö eest!

Helen Parker

Tartu Ülikool

Maailma keelte ja kultuuride kolledž

Võõrkeeleõpetaja magister

## RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

**Helen Parker**

### **Exploring Seventh-Graders' Interpretations of Anthony Browne's Picturebook *Zoo*: a Case Study**

### **Seitsmenda klassi õpilaste tõlgendused Anthony Browne'i pildiraamatu „Zoo“ põhjal: juhtumiuuring**

Magistritöö

2019

Lehekülgede arv: 60

Annotatsioon:

Pildiraamatuid seostatakse üldiselt nooremate lastega ja neid kasutatakse neile erinevate maailma osade tutvustamiseks. Pildiraamatute autorid on loonud märkimisväärse valiku pildiraamatuid, mille sihtgrupp ei piirdu üksnes väikeste lastega. Sellised pildiraamatud eeldavad sügavamat arusaama kujundlikkusest ja nõuavad peenemal tasandil tõlgendamist, et pildiraamatust tõeliselt aru saada. Käesolev magistritöö vaatleb Anthony Browne'i pildiraamatu „Zoo“ (Loomaaed) põhjal kuidas seitsmenda klassi õpilased tõlgendavad pildiraamatuid. Magistritöö on jagatud kahte peatükki. Esimeses peatükis esitatakse kirjanduse ülevaade ja töö teine suur peatükk keskendub empiirilisele uurimusele.

Kirjanduse ülevaade koosneb kolmest osast: esimeses osas arutletakse piltide ja teksti vahekorra pildiraamatutes. Teises osas keskendutakse Evelyn Arizpe ja Morag Styles'i (2003) läbi viidud uurimusele, mille eesmärk oli vaadelda õpilaste tõlgendusi Anthony Browne'i pildiraamatust „Zoo“. Kolmandas osas antakse ülevaade eelnevatest uurimustest seoses pildiraamatute kasutamisega inglise keele kui teise keele tundides.

Teises peatükis analüüsitakse Anthony Browne'i pildiraamatut „Zoo“ ja antakse ülevaade empiirilisest uurimusest. Empiiriline osa põhineb juhtumiuuringul, mille käigus intervjueriti 11 seitsmenda klassi õpilast eesmärgiga saada teada kuidas nad tõlgendavad Anthony Browne'i pildiraamatut „Zoo“. Töö lõpus tuuakse välja juhtumiuuringu tulemused ja neid analüüsitakse võrdluses Evelyn Arizpe ja Morag Styles'i (2003) poolt läbi viidud uurimusega. Samuti tuuakse välja uurimuse nõrgad küljed.

Märksõnad: pildiraamatud, õpilaste tõlgendused pildiraamatutest

## **Lihtlitsents lõputöö reprodutseerimiseks ja üldsusele kättesaadavaks tegemiseks**

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*Helen Parker*

20.05.2019

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Helen Parker

Tartus, 20.05.2019

**Lõputöö on lubatud kaitsmisele.**

Natalja Zagura

Tartus, 20.05.2019